



ASSEMBLYMEMBER COREY JACKSON, DSW, MSW. 60TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 1968 - CalFresh: enrollment for senior citizens.

BILL SUMMARY

AB 1968 would require the Department of Social Services (DSS) to identify qualifying seniors (age 60 years and older) and automatically enroll those individuals into the Cal Fresh program.

BACKGROUND

Per the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as the Cal Fresh program, helped 4,627,700 (1 in 8 Californians) in fiscal year 2022.¹ Of that number, 991,816 were seniors (a person age 60 or over) in 2022, and over 21% of participants in SNAP²

California's over-65 population is expected to be 87% higher in 2030 than in 2012, an increase of more than four million people. This group is expected to grow much faster than the rest of the population, rising from 12 percent in 2012 to 19 percent in 2030.³

SNAP is a foundational tool in the fight against food insecurity and poverty. As observed by the CBPP, SNAP is one of the more effective forms of economic stimulus in a bad economy; with every dollar increase in SNAP benefits generating \$1.70 in economic activity.⁴

A 2021 study by the Annals of Internal Medicine (ACP) found that higher enrollment by seniors in SNAP is associated with fewer hospital and long-term care admissions and emergency room visits – and an estimated Medicaid cost-savings of \$2,360 per person annually.⁵

PROBLEM

In 2018, California ranked among the lowest in the nation for SNAP participation and ranked the lowest for senior participation. According to data from the USDA, California seniors had a participation rate of 32% in 2018, well below the national average of 42%.⁶

California has plenty of room for growth in SNAP participation for seniors. For example, in 2018, Oregon observed 67% of eligible seniors participating in SNAP.⁷ Washington State saw similar success, with 64% of eligible seniors participating in SNAP in 2018.⁸ Finally, even Florida outperformed California in SNAP participation rates for eligible seniors, at 67% in 2018.⁹

California can no longer afford to leave options on the table when combating food insecurity, especially for its seniors. It must get creative to ensure a good quality of life for its growing senior population.

SOLUTION

AB 1968 would require DSS, by January 1, 2026, to create a system to automatically enroll in Cal Fresh, qualifying individuals who meet the eligibility requirements of the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Program (SSI/SSP) and those who meet those requirements but are not eligible solely due to their immigration status.

The bill would require, by January 1, 2026, or after the automatic enrollment process takes effect, whichever is sooner, county eligibility workers to regularly contact qualifying individuals to notify them of their estimated potential benefit, including through notice by mail.

Laslty, this bill would require DSS to seek by July 1, 2025, any waiver from the United States Department of Agriculture necessary to implement these requirements.

SUPPORT

California Retired Teachers Association

STAFF CONTACT:

Dubrea Sanders
916-319-3126

Dubrea.Sanders@asm.ca.gov

¹ [Snap Factsheet California](#)

² [CF dashboard - PUBLIC | Tableau Public](#)

³ [Planning for California's Growing Senior Population](#)

⁴ [SNAP Is Effective and Efficient](#)

⁵ [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Health Care Use in Older Adults](#)

⁶ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap#>

⁷ [A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets](#)

⁸ [Ibid](#)

⁹ [SNAP Participation Rates by State, All Eligible People \(FY 2018\)](#)